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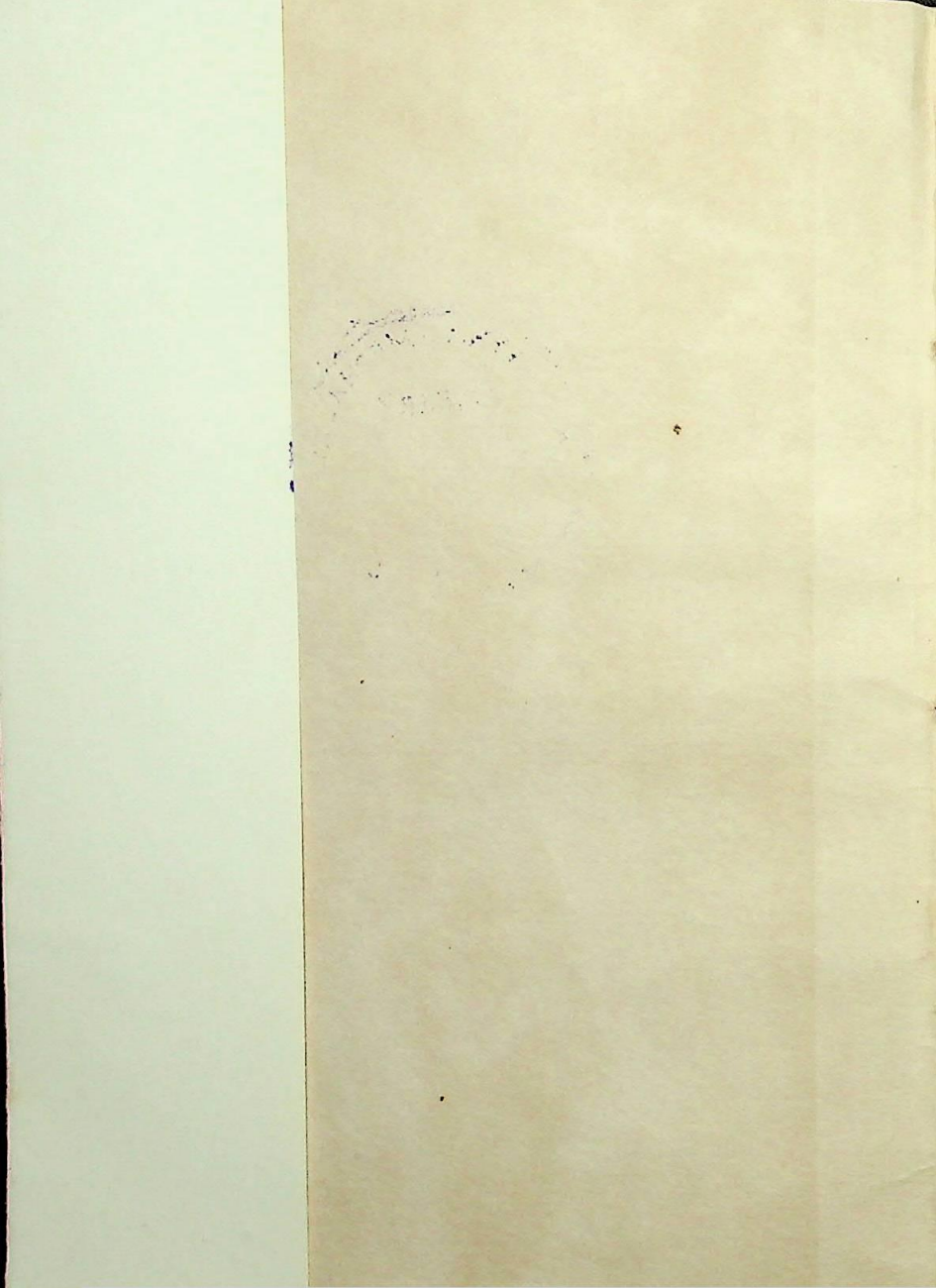
SRI AUROBINDO AND HIS YOGA

AN INTRODUCTION

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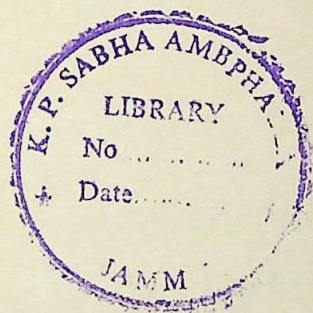
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AN INTRODUCTION



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SRI AUROBINDO

WHO is Sri Aurobindo? Put this question to half-a-dozen of your friends and you will receive as many answers. Yes, he is a revolutionary, some will say; no a poet, others will reply; a saint, a yogi, yet others will aver.

All are right; for Sri Aurobindo was all in one—and more.

Sri Aurobindo was born at Calcutta on August 15th, 1872. He was the third of the five children of Dr. Krishnadhan Ghose and Swarnalata Devi. Dr. Krishnadhan's one ambition was that his children should receive and imbibe English education, English culture and nothing else. Thus when Aurobindo was seven, the entire family sailed for England where he and his two elder brothers were entrusted to the care of a clergyman in Manchester for education and upbringing. For a period of fourteen years until he was 21, Aurobindo lived, learned and also suffered in England. Suffered, because the doctor's remittances to his young sons in the inhospitable climes of England soon ceased to be regular and after a time stopped altogether. Sri Aurobindo tells us how there were days when he had to content himself with a penny worth of bun and a cup of tea. These and other privations did not, however, detract from his studies of which languages were his special passion. He learnt not only English and French but also Greek, Latin, Italian, German and Spanish. He covered subjects in two years what would normally take three, passed

with honours and distinction, bagged all prizes. He appeared for and passed the much coveted I.C.S. examination in deference to his father's wishes, and contrived to fail in the routine horse-riding test in deference to his own. For even at that young age, Sri Aurobindo had realised that a pass in the I.C.S. meant a job in the Government—an alien Government that had subjugated India and was keeping it under its iron heels, he had made up his mind to work for India's freedom.

In 1893, Sri Aurobindo returned to India and took up service in Baroda State, beginning with the Revenue Department and ending as Vice-Principal of Baroda College. This was a period of rediscovery of his Indian heritage and culture. With his unabated enthusiasm for languages he soon learnt Sanskrit and a few other Indian languages including his mother tongue Bengali.

Those were days of political upheavels and the patriot in Sri Aurobindo could not but be drawn into their vortex. He started in a small way in the beginning by contributing a series of pungent articles in *Indu Prakash*, a Poona paper aimed at arousing the national spirit from its torpor. With the partition of Bengal and the righteous indignation it let loose in the country, Sri Aurobindo plunged headlong into the fray. Married hardly a few years he left his home and busied himself in organising groups, giving speeches and writing for various papers like *Yugantar*, *Bande Mataram*, *Karma Yogin* etc. He voiced his country's protest both against the ruling Government and the 'Moderates' for the latter's wishful hopes of obtaining India's deliverance through petitions and prayers. Soon he emerged into a recognised national leader and gave

enough cause for anxiety to the Government. In 1908 he was arrested in connection with what is known as Alipore Bomb Case and thrown into prison. That was the turning point in the career of Sri Aurobindo.

A few years prior to his arrest and incarceration, Sri Aurobindo had seriously take up yoga, a discipline of body, mind and life-energy, in order to realise a larger spiritual consciousness and power to use them for the emancipation of India. The discipline was beginning to bear fruit as revealed in some of his inspired writings of the time, whether of poetry or of politics. Now confined to the four walls of a Prison cell, Sri Aurobindo saw the beatific vision of Godhead Lord Krishna :

“I looked at the jail that secluded me from men and it was no longer by its high walls that I was imprisoned; no it was Vasudeva who surrounded me. I walked under the branches of the tree in front of my cell but it was not the tree, I knew it was Vasudeva, it was Sri Krishna whom I saw standing there and holding over me his shade. I looked at the bare walls of my cell, the very grating that did duty for a door and again I saw Vasudeva. It was Narayana who was guarding and standing sentry over me. Or I lay on the coarse blankets that were given me for a couch and felt the arm of Sri Krishna around me, the arms of my Friend and Lover. I looked at the prisoners in the jail, the thieves, the murderers, the swindlers, and as I looked at them I saw Vasudeva, it was Narayana whom I found in these darkened souls and misused bodies.”

Sri Aurobindo not only had the vision of the Lord but also got a clear indication of his mission in life which henceforth was to work for a greater emancipation of a larger humanity, the deliverance of the entire mankind from its age-long thralldom to Ignorance and Death into a New Life and Light. Politics was no longer to be his field of action and give it up he must. After a year's confinement in jail, Sri Aurobindo was released, and true to the Adesh he had received, he sailed for Pondicherry, then a French colony in South India. For an unbroken period of over forty years, until his dramatic passing on the 5th of December 1950, he engaged himself in active sadhana which included the conducting of a highly philosophical journal called *Arya*, devoted to the exposition of the Higher Knowledge he had received, and guiding the disciples who had started gathering round him in the path of the Yoga which he had practised and perfected.

What is this Yoga, what is the Teaching that bases his Yoga?

Put simply: Sri Aurobindo regards the whole world as a manifestation of God; it is as real as God is. Life has a meaning, a purpose. Every thing in Nature is trying to express what is concealed in itself—God. In the present state of Ignorance, we are not conscious of God in ourselves and in others. Sri Aurobindo teaches the way by which one can gradually divest oneself of the veils of Ignorance and become conscious of the Light of God within and above and ultimately embody the Consciousness of God in one's life—the whole of life. This is the meaning of his yoga: to raise man from his half-animal state to the status of a God.

The central place, *pīṭha*, where he practised and taught this yoga and built up a life according to this conception is the Ashram known by his name. It has been nourished and developed from its beginning by his radiant co-worker whom we adore as the Mother.

INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

WHAT IS YOGA ?

Yoga means a union with the Divine. It is also a method, a discipline, of achieving this union. Yoga is a sustained effort by which the aspirant takes hold of one or other part of his being, be it the mind, the heart or the body, puts it through a rigorous process of purification and subtilisation that gives it a loftier and deeper orientation. The lower elements that are unwilling or unable to enter into this purificatory process are quelled, subdued into quiescence; the higher nature is allowed to gather momentum, and in a swift or a progressive unveiling the being realises its true nature and enters the domains of the Spirit. All Yogas - the traditional ones—aim at transcendence of the lower nature and ego and attainment to a spiritual freedom and release; they seek liberation, salvation, *mokṣa*.

To a critic, or to one ignorant of the ways of the Yoga, this effort may seem like an attempt to raise oneself by one's bootstraps, a thing impossible. But it is really not so. Yogic disciplines are perfectly sound and rational, as anyone who has travelled on the path, not to say of the unbroken line of sages, seers, Rishis and Yogins we see in our own times, can bear witness. In fact, the fundamental principle of Yoga affirms

that the Divine which one seeks after is there already, not only in oneself but equally outside and everywhere. It is therefore perfectly feasible, in a sense even inevitable, that each man at one time or another, in this or a future life, must, of necessity, take himself in hand, exert himself in scaling the heights of the Spirit or plumbing the depths of the Soul. Of course, the thing is difficult as any worthwhile endeavour necessarily is. There are grave risks of failures, of deviations, of abandonment. These are, however, not due to any inherent defect or unsoundness of the Yogic principles themselves, but to the limitations and obdurations of the different and differing elements that constitute human nature. Sincerity, faith, devotion, and a relentless examination of oneself are some of the important qualities that one should have, or aspire to have, if one is to walk safely on the path. In other words, no matter what type of Yoga a person chooses, much personal effort is called for in the beginning and for a long time. It is however heartening that presiding over his personal effort there ever stands the guiding, helping and uplifting power of the Divine Grace.

WHAT IS RELIGION ?

The question may be asked : Why this strenuous path of Yoga ? why not the Religion in which one is born or brought up ? Surely, if one's bent is in that direction, it is a less difficult and a safer discipline. Religion is a path in the journey of human life. In the labyrinthine forest of unregenerated lower nature, of turbulent passions and insatiable desires, it hews out a safe course through which the mass of humanity is led towards a distant future. It holds before

man the ideal of a higher life, of a hereafter, and seeks for its achievement by gentler processes of control and sublimation. All profound religions, extant or defunct, have, at their core, a fundamental spiritual experience; the creeds, rituals, symbols, formulae etc. originating from this experience have, or have had in the heyday of their glory, some deeply occult or spiritual significance. But the best in religion is a compromise—a compromise between two apparently contradictory values, the values of the higher life demanding a constant upward movement, and the lower or the vulgar elements which, in terms of the compromise, are allowed a great deal of latitude, seeking for the slightest opportunity or the smallest chink in the armour to pull down the whole effort. Those religions that have been plastic enough to admit of necessary changes in their forms and formulas according to the times have survived and still exercise powerful influence on their followers, but those that refused to change have become heavily incrustated with shells of mere rituals and dogmas and what else, and have all but lost their power and vitality.

Religion can be a means but not fulfilment, whereas Yoga is both a means and result. Religion prepares, leads but does not reach. To arrive at spiritual consciousness religion has to give way at one stage to spiritual discipline. Religion is a compromise between the higher and the lower in which the lower movement can and quite often does get the better of the higher. Religion is an adjustment, not a change. Yoga is, on the other hand, uncompromising in its demands; it insists on utter purity, suffers no fancy or pretence. For one seeking for spiritual life, not merely a sattwic life of controlled passions and desires, Yoga is the way.

HATHA YOGA

Now Yoga, as is well-known, is of different kinds. The most common of these is the Hatha Yoga.

Hathayoga aims at the perfection of the physical body and life, a perfection which is beyond the range or reach of common humanity. Ordinarily, Nature provides a degree of equilibrium between the gross body and the vital force that animates it, sufficient for the normal functioning of the physical activities during the life-span of the individual in a given environment. In fact, the individual draws and utilises but a modicum of vital force from the unlimited universal energy of Nature. The discipline of Hathayoga seeks to establish a new equilibrium whereby the physical body is trained to overcome its inherent limitations and to receive, contain and utilise a far greater amount of vital or pranic force without itself breaking in the process of reception and utilisation. The means for the development and establishment of this new equilibrium is found in a series of postural exercises called *āsanas* which, in Hathayoga, holds a key importance next only to *prāṇāyāma* which follows them.

These *āsanas* have a two-fold function; firstly, they provide stability and suppleness to the body and help in overcoming its habitual restlessness and agitated movements (a sure sign of its inability to contain or hold the energy poured into it by the universal Energy); secondly, they bring about a purification of the body and nervous system resulting in a perfect health and an extraordinary capacity for physical exertion and performance.

Prānāyāma, the control of breath, too, serves a double purpose; it conduces to the perfection of the body. It awakens the *kundalini śakti* which in the normal human being lies dormant at the base of the spine, *mūlādhāra*. The awakening of this *śakti* and its progress through the other centres or *cakras* in the subtle body opens to the disciple new horizons of consciousness, experience and faculties undreamt of by him in the ordinary life. The results of Hathayoga are extremely striking.

RAJA YOGA

While the Hathayoga is primarily concerned with the purification of the nervous system and attainment of extraordinary powers of the physical body, Rajayoga directs its efforts towards the mastery of thought and consciousness and the liberation of the mental being. The normal state of the mind of man is a house divided against itself; there is a feverish activity going on all the time in a pell-mell of disorder and disarray. It is as if the Lord, the Purusha, is held in subjection as a helpless witness, whilst his functionaries, the senses, emotions, passions, desires and the like have taken over the reins. The first movement of the Rajayogic discipline is, therefore, to establish, by patient and persistent efforts, a set of good habits of the mind in replacement of the lawless movements of the being. The discipline entails a moral purification of the mentality and consists of *yamas*, rules of moral control, which aim at the cessation and the conquest of rajasic or kinetic egoism, its passions and desires; *niyamas* a course of discipline directed towards the establishment of peace, purity and calmness as a preparatory ground for concentration which is an important auxiliary in the Rajayogic discipline.

As in Hathayoga, in Rajayoga too, *āsanas* and *prāṇāyāma* have their due place, but instead of an exclusive emphasis being laid on them as in the former discipline, the Rajayogic method uses these processes to meet its immediate objective, which is not so much to secure supernormal powers of the body as to awaken the *kundalini śakti* which, aroused, rises upwards through the six centres. This awakening charges the body with a divine energy and prepares it for that concentration in Samadhi which is the crown of the Rajayogic discipline.

The object of Rajayogic concentration is to exclude all outgoing mental activity, *cittavṛtti nirodha*, and to dwell only on the one object of concentration so much that the mind is absorbed in the object. The use of an external object like *iṣṭa devatā*, a symbol or a mantra is a support for the truant mind to be repeatedly brought back and to be rivetted on the object or the idea. By this dwelling of the mind on an idea in an exclusive concentration, the mind plunges from the idea into its reality, enters into a profound communion of the soul with the Divine.

THE TRIPLE-PATH OF KNOWLEDGE, DEVOTION AND WORKS.

The triple path of Knowledge, Devotion, Works – *jñāna*, *bhakti* and *karma* goes a step farther than Rajayoga. It does not base itself exclusively on the physical and the nervous system as does the Hathayoga, or wholly on the mental system as does the Rajayoga. Rather, it takes hold of one of the principles of the man's being like the intellect, the heart or the will, and turns it away from its external preoccupation to the concentration on the Divine.

The way of Knowledge, *jñānayoga*, proceeds by mental cogitation and discrimination, *vicāra* and *viveka*, to differentiate between the apparent or the phenomenal being which the man in the exterior is subject to, *prakṛti*, the phenomenal nature and consciousness, and the self, which man essentially is, immutable and imperishable. Exclusively followed, the Way of Knowledge turns towards the rejection of the world and seeks to get away from it and the sense objects, and aims at the immersion of the soul in the impersonal Brahman or Absolute.

The Way of Love, *bhaktiyoga*, on the other hand, believes in the reality of the world and conceives of a Lord as the ruler and the enjoyer of this universe. It seizes hold of the emotional nature, and, by intense aspiration and purification, turns it from its attachment to the egoistic and assertive human love and directs it towards the Supreme Person, the God of all attributes, love and splendour. Worship and meditation hold an important place in the traditional *bhaktiyoga*. Worship leads to adoration of the Divine as the Beloved and the Bhakta drinks deep from the well of divine Love. Love brings a joy all its own in its relation with the Divine, and, as it develops, the joy and closeness merge into a bliss of union of the lover with the Beloved.

The Way of Works. In *Karmayoga*, the lever of upward movement is the will. By works the seeker endeavours to shed his egoistic aim in all that he does, and his attachment to the outcome of his actions. The individual will is sought to be merged with the supreme Will. As purification proceeds, the worker becomes aware of the universal Energy carrying out all actions, and the Lord of the Energy initiating

and directing the actions, the individual doer being no more than an instrument and a conscious point of action. To this supreme Will the worker, the work and its results are joyfully handed over; the soul is released from its bondage into an identification with the One.

INTEGRAL YOGA.

The Integral Yoga is all these yogas, *and more*. It includes in its discipline the essential lines of the traditional systems, though not all their methods or details and carries them to their highest and fullest significance. Asana and Pranayama, the 'musts' of Hathayoga are not compulsory; they can be employed for a time for the help they can give to some natures. No conscious effort is made to raise the Kundalini Shakti; such an attempt is looked upon with disfavour for the untoward, sometime disastrous, consequence that attends a premature opening in a being who has not undergone sufficient purification. Dhyana or meditation has an important place, but as a means for the settling down of calmness and peace initially, and later for the deepening or the heightening of consciousness, than as a direct step to Samadhi of Rajayogic type. An exclusive preoccupation of one's time and energy in meditation is discouraged for it tends towards a lop-sided movement or development of the being. Similarly with the Way of the heart; one can sing the glory of the Lord, participate in bhajans, kirtans etc., and resort to formal worship of the chosen deity or recite mantra or japa. But these are to be looked upon as adjuncts or aids for a time for the opening of one's heart to the Divine, but not as things to be indulged as ends in themselves, for they too tend towards an exclusiveness

and depart from the aim of the Integral Yoga. Works are given great importance, but not as a feverish pursuit of some activity or other, not because that one's kinetic nature demands to be 'up and doing', not even because that it is all in the service of the Divine in humanity but principally as a means for the purification of one's will and ego and as a preparation for a total surrender to the Divine Mother of all one is, has or does.

The Integral Yoga is called the Yoga of self-perfection and it would not do if we only aimed to reach the heights or the depths of the spirit in some part of our being and stayed there in some kind of unity or union with the Divine, leaving the rest of the elements of our nature as it was. That is the aim of the traditional Yogas. But this Yoga envisages the bringing down of the gains of the Spirit to the nethermost regions of our existence, into every nook and corner of our being, into the very cells of our body, in order to utterly transmute and transform them. The ascent to the spiritual consciousness is a difficult process on all accounts, but many have succeeded in the effort; they have liberated themselves, attained Moksha. They are, however, individual efforts and individual attainments, and in spite of the spiritual influence these liberated souls have spread around them, in the society they lived, in the country they were born, the beneficent effect has not been radical enough and the world continues to be what it is, a stronghold of the powers of Ignorance and Falsehood. The descent of the highest spiritual consciousness, of the powers of the Mind of Light, called the Supramental Force and Consciousness, which alone can transform the human consciousness into divine consciousness, is also a Herculean task not contemplated by the earlier yogas of the Vedantic

tradition, contemplated perhaps but hardly systematised or organised by the Tantric. The power of the Supermind is sought to be brought down into the inconscient and ignorant regions of matter, life and mind, not for the sake of anyone's personal *siddhi*, but as a part of the Divine plan, in fulfilment of Divine's Will in the universe, which, as is clear from the evolutionary trend of Nature, is to embody and manifest a Divine life on earth, by divinising the very stuff of mind, life and matter.

It is the truth of the Integral Yoga that it does not see any permanent opposition between Spirit and Matter, nor does it hold that the affirmation of Matter is a denial of the Spirit or *vice versa*; nor does it conceive that this world of ours is an illusion from which the spiritual seeker must flee in order to achieve his spiritual goal; nor does this Yoga share the materialist's extreme demand for Matter's omnipotence or his denial of the Spirit. On the other hand, this Yoga affirms that Spirit and Matter are two poles of one Existence; that Matter evolves into Spirit by a progressive enlargement and reversal of consciousness, i.e. from Inconscience to Superconscience, from Ignorance to Knowledge, from Death to Immortality. This is possible because the Spirit is already there in Matter and is its secret inhabitant. In this involution of Spirit in Matter and the evolution of Matter into Spirit—a stair of ascent and descent—in which man in the middle term is now an active participant lies the secret of Creation and the truth of the relation between man, Nature and God. Any detailed discussion of this engrossing subject is outside the scope of the present introductory essay and the reader is referred to the original works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother listed in the appendix.

A few salient points of the Integral sadhana.

Principally, the sadhana comprises of three largely successive but somewhat overlapping movements. The first movement is concerned with the coming into the front of the psychic entity, the secret individual divine element that is lodged in every human heart. The discipline to bring this entity forward is more internal than external, more psychological than physical. It is not so much on the individual effort or askesis that reliance is placed as on the Divine Shakti which the sadhaka invokes to descend into himself, take possession of his entire nature and transform it into the mould of the divine nature. Aspiration is the first thing. It means the awakening of a need in the being, an inner urge, a psychic call that is so insistent that one becomes ready to begin the journey on the path to the great discovery, whether, initially, by the power of one's mind, or heart or will, whichever is more ready and willing. The search for the Divine is not for one's own sake, for any material or spiritual benefit, not even for the sake of humanity, but wholly for the sake of the Divine. This is a cardinal point of the Integral Yoga, for if one is hankering after personal *siddhi*, salvation or *mukti*, one need not apply oneself to this arduous sadhana; rather he should turn to other systems which are less strenuous and yet lead him to his cherished goal.

The next step is consecration, a whole-hearted dedication to the Divine Mother from the very depths of one's being. If the heart, or the mind or the will, any two or all of them can join in this consecration in the very beginning, very much better. Even if they do not, it is absolutely necessary that the sincerity

of the central part must extend to them by and by until the whole being is turned to Her. Only then can the consecration be total, entirely effective and acceptable.

A massive self-offering to the Mother is the next step; all actions, movements, thoughts, feelings, impulses, sensations etc. are made over to the Divine Shakti. A total self-offering or surrender does not come about easily and soon. There are elements in our nature that are unwilling to give themselves to the Mother, those that hide in subterfuge, rebel, revolt, refuse. All these are to be brought round and unhesitatingly offered to the Divine Shakti, her action allowed to work and purify what are to be purified and eliminate what are to be discarded from our nature. A ceaseless vigilance, an obstinate patience, and a willingness to reject all movements that are contrary to one's aspiration and consecration, and, above all, an indomitable faith in the Mother's workings are absolutely necessary, without which this Yoga cannot be done.

Another important step of the sadhana is opening oneself to the Divine Mother. Essentially, it means to turn the consciousness to dwell receptively either in the heart region or above the head. As an infant lying in his mother's arms is receptive to her vibrations and is 'open' to her, albeit unconsciously, so too the sadhaka must constantly and consciously dwell in the heart or above the head and be open or receptive to the Mother's transmuting vibrations. As the opening deepens, slowly or quickly, a personal relationship establishes itself with the psychic entity within.

The advent of this psychic entity, first as an influence, and at a later stage as a full-fledged psychic being, heralds the

beginning of great changes in our surface nature, and the bringing about of a limited but hitherto unrealised harmony of our being at different levels of our embodied existence. The psychic assumes control of our external being as well as the inner; our mind, heart, emotions, feelings, sensations, movements of the physical are more and more effortlessly turned towards the Divine Mother; love, devotion and adoration become our norms, a sense of the presence of the Mother is constantly felt, Her guiding hand is perceived more and more, and the whole movement of the sadhana towards the next stage is speeded up. Our personal effort at this stage consists in a total sincerity and devotion to the Mother and our unceasing vigilance to keep out the intruding hostile influences that may masquerade under the name and forms of the Mother.

The first movement which is called by Sri Aurobindo as 'psychicisation', although fundamental in character, is a limited and a circumscribed movement, and is not sufficient for the Yoga of self-perfection. In the second movement which is called by Sri Aurobindo as 'spiritualisation of the being', the sadhaka proceeds by concentration in the mind, towards the realisation, of the Self or Spirit above, in order to link the individual consciousness with the higher cosmic consciousness. By repeated ascents to these higher levels he establishes his consciousness permanently there and the increasing peace, light and power that descend as a result irradiate the lower regions of our being and prepare for the next, the last, movement, called by Sri Aurobindo 'Supramentalisation'.

The change effected in the lower regions by the descent of spiritual light and power is not adequate for Integral

perfection. For nothing short of a complete transformation of the entire being is the goal of this Yoga. Only the descent of the highest Supramental Force and Consciousness can effectuate this radical change in the earth and human nature. So the third movement is aimed at the bringing down of the plenary Force of the Supermind to every region of our being including the obscurities of our physical to bring about a transformation never before attempted—the transmutation of the very stuff of our mind, life and matter.

Scientists say that many billion miles away from the earth, deep in space, giant stars or novas are constantly breaking up destroying the old and creating new worlds. Happily, we neither see nor hear these. This is perhaps a material echo of the spiritual truth which the Mother has told us in these words :

The greatest victories are the least noisy ;
the manifestation of a new world is not
proclaimed by beat of drum.

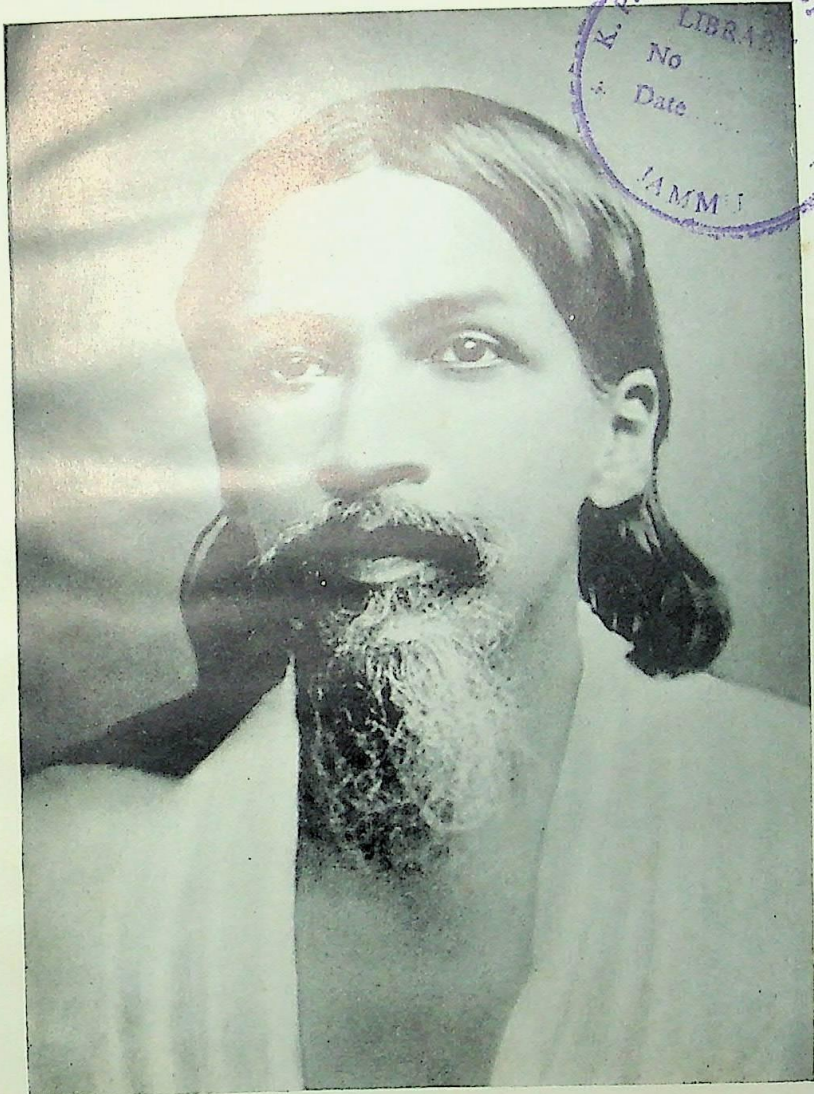
Far reaching decisions, or events of incalculable consequence for the earth, may be in the offing or are being worked out in the subtle worlds at this moment, of which, unhappily shall we say, we the ephemeral creatures of this world have little or no means of knowing. Perhaps this veiling is necessary in the divine scheme of things !

Occasionally, some light from the heights, either to carry out a command, or, more probably, moved by a compassion the depth of which the mere human has no means of sounding, comes down, takes a visible shape and form of flesh and blood,

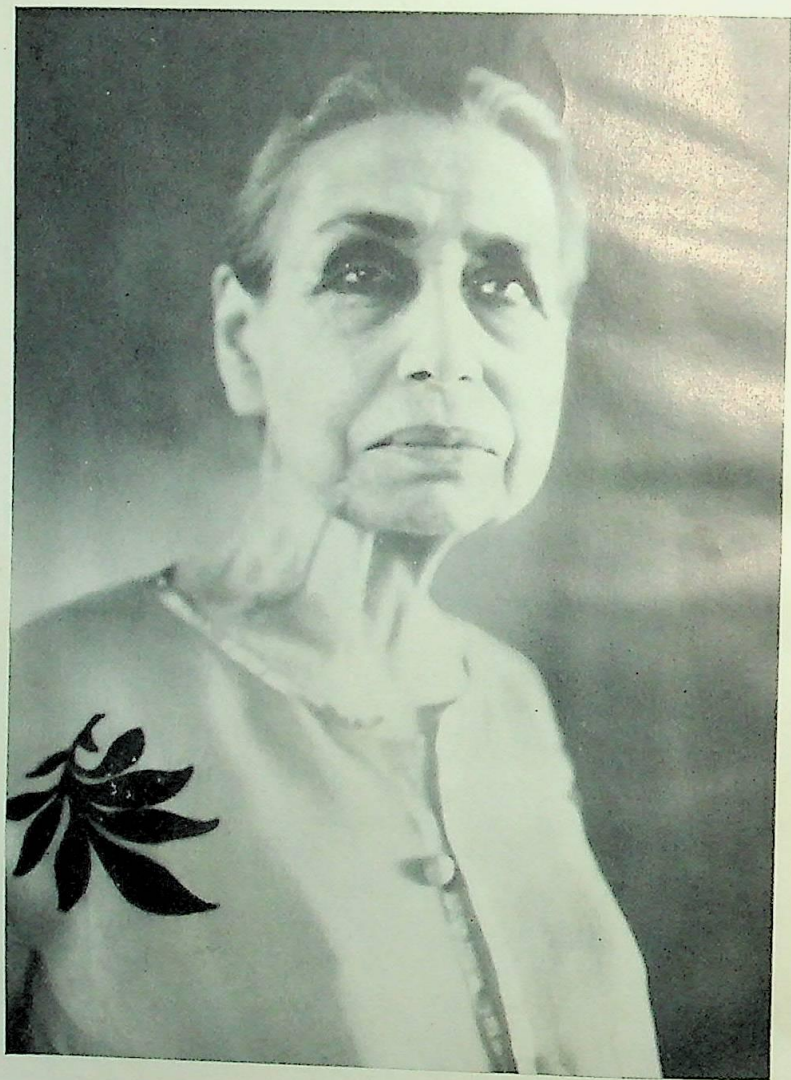
moves among men, to teach what only a few are willing to learn or effectuate a movement which a still fewer are prepared to acknowledge or understand. But the teaching takes root, the movement grows, spreads and yields fruits—man in spite of himself moves forward.

Sri Aurobindo is such a Light. He came to attempt and accomplish what had never been attempted or accomplished before, and he came to do it neither for himself, nor for a select few whom he considered as his followers, but for the entire humanity. He came to establish a new consciousness, a new power on this earth which could eventually change the very stuff of man's nature, his mind, his life, his body, with a full-fledged divine nature—a change of man from his present humanity to super-humanity.

Sri Aurobindo has given the Vision, established the Ideal and perfected the Way to realise it. The Mother is at toil to make this Divine Truth of Knowledge, Will, Power and Bliss immediately real and decisive in the life of humanity. The Ashram is, as it were, the nursery where the new life is taking shape.



Sri Aurobindo



The Mother

THE MOTHER

THERE is no biography as such of the Mother, for the simple reason that She has not permitted one. She says:

“Do not ask questions about the details of the material existence of this body; they are in themselves of no interest and must not attract attention.

Throughout all this life, knowingly or unknowingly, I have been what the Lord wanted me to be, I have done what the Lord wanted me to do. That alone matters.”

All the same, a few extracts from Her writings would throw considerable light on Her life.

“When I was a child—about the age of thirteen and for about a year—every night as soon as I was in bed, it seemed to me that I came out of my body and rose straight up above the house, then above the town, very high. I saw myself then clad in a magnificent golden robe, longer than myself; and as I rose, the robe lengthened, spreading in a circle around me to form, as it were an immense roof over the town. Then I would see coming out from all sides men, women, children, old men, sick men, unhappy men; they gathered under the outspread

robe, imploring help, recounting their miseries, their sufferings, their pains. In reply, the robe, supple and living, stretched out to them individually, and as soon as they touched it, they were consoled or healed, and entered back into their body happier and stronger than they had ever been before coming out of it. Nothing appeared to me more beautiful, nothing made me more happy; and all the activities of the day seemed to me dull and colourless, without real life, in comparison with this activity of the night which was for me the true life. Often as I thus rose, I would see on my left an old man, silent and immobile, who looked at me with a benevolent affection and encouraged me by his presence. This old man dressed in a long robe of sombre violet was the personification—I knew later – of him who is called the Man of Sorrows.”

Also,

“‘When and how did I become conscious of a mission, which I was to fulfil on earth? And when and how I met Sri Aurobindo?’

These two questions you have asked me and I promised a short reply.

For the knowledge of the mission, it is difficult to say when it came to me. It is as though I was born with it, and following the growth of the mind and brain, the precision and completeness of this consciousness grew also.

Between 11 and 13 a series of psychic and spiritual experiences revealed to me not only the existence

of God but man's possibility of meeting with Him, or revealing Him integrally in consciousness and action, of manifesting Him upon earth in a life divine. This along with a practical discipline for its fulfilment, was given to me, during my body's sleep, by several teachers some of whom I met afterwards on the physical plane. Later on, as the interior and exterior development proceeded, the spiritual and physical relation with one of these beings became more and more clear and pregnant, and although I knew little of the Indian philosophies and religions at that time, I was led to call him Krishna and thenceforth I was aware that it was with him (whom I should meet on earth one day) that the divine work was to be done.

As soon as I saw Sri Aurobindo, I recognised him as the well-known being whom I used to call Krishna...and this is enough to explain why I am fully convinced that my place and my work are here in India."

Further :

"From the very beginning of my present earthly existence, I happened to meet many people who said that they had a great inner aspiration, an urge towards something deeper and more true, but could not advance, because, they said, they were bound, subjected, slaves of this brutal necessity of earning their livelihood and that put such a burden upon them, took so much of their time and energy that nothing remained to enable them to devote to any other kind of activity inner or outer. I have heard this very often, I have seen many poor people like that—I

do not say poor from the monetary point of view, but poor, because they felt themselves imprisoned in a narrow and deadening material necessity.

I was very young at that time and I always told myself that one day, if I could, I would try to create a small world – oh, quite small – a small world where people could live without having to busy themselves with food and lodging and clothes and all the imperious necessities of life, so that I might see whether all these energies freed by the certainty of an assured material existence would turn spontaneously towards the divine life and the inner realisation.”

“There should be somewhere upon earth a place that no nation can claim as the sole property, a place where all human beings of good-will, sincere in their aspiration, could live freely as citizens of the world, obeying one single authority, that of the supreme Truth, a place of peace, concord, harmony where all the fighting instincts of man would be used exclusively to conquer the causes of sufferings and miseries, to surmount his weakness and ignorance, to triumph over his limitations and incapacities; a place where the needs of the spirit and the care for progress would get precedence over the satisfaction of desires, passions, the seeking for material pleasures and employment. In this place, children would be able to grow and develop integrally without losing contact with their soul. Education would be given not with a view to passing examinations and getting certificates and posts but for enriching the existing faculties and bringing forth new

ones. In this place titles and positions would be supplanted by opportunities to serve and organise. The needs of the body will be provided for equally in the case of each and everyone. In the general organisation intellectual, moral and spiritual superiority will find expression not in the enhancement of the pleasures and powers of life but in the increase of duties and responsibilities. Artistic beauty in all forms, painting, sculpture, music, literature, will be available equally to all, the opportunity to share in the joys they give being limited solely by each one's capacities and not by social and financial position. For in this ideal place money would be no more the sovereign lord. Individual value would have a greater importance than the value due to material wealth and social position. Work would not be there as the means for gaining one's livelihood, it would be the means whereby to express oneself, develop one's capacities and possibilities, while doing at the same time service to the whole group, which on its side, would provide for each one's subsistence and for the field of his work. In brief, it would be a place where the relations among human beings, usually based almost upon competition and strife, would be replaced by relations of emulation for doing better, for collaboration, relations of real brotherhood."

Finally a few excerpts from Sri Aurobindo on the subject :

"The Mother's consciousness and mine are the same, the one Divine Consciousness in two, because that is necessary for the play.

“The Mother’s consciousness is the divine consciousness and the Light that comes from it is that of the Divine Truth. One who receives and accepts and lives in the Mother’s light, will begin to see the truth on all the planes, the mental, the vital, the physical. He will reject all that is undivine.

“There is no difference between the Mother’s path and mine; we have and always had the same path, the path that leads to the supramental change and the divine realisation; not only at the end, but from the beginning they have been the same.

“Know that the Mother’s light and force are the light and force of the Truth; remain always in contact with the Mother’s light and force, then only can you grow into the divine Truth.”

APPENDIX

Recommended graded reading

For Sadhana :

1. The Mother
2. Conversations of the Mother
3. Bases of Yoga
4. Lights on Yoga
5. Words of the Mother
6. On Education
7. Savitri

Scriptures :

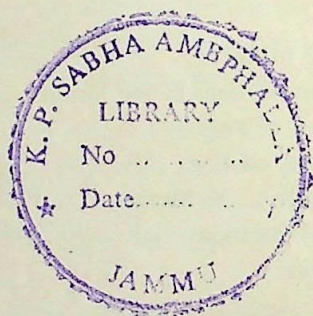
1. Essays on the Gita
2. Eight Upanishads
3. Isha Upanishad
4. Kena Upanishad

Teaching & Philosophy :

1. Yoga and its objects
2. Hour of God
3. Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram
4. Supramental Manifestation
5. Synthesis of Yoga
6. Life Divine

General :

1. Renaissance in India
2. Foundations of Indian Culture
3. Ideal of Human Unity
4. Human Cycle, etc. etc.



Price: Re. ONE